

The Rhino in the Room

In Pursuit of a More “Leaderful” Organization

*First presented at LWV Convention 2014 by Melissa Breach, LWVC Executive Director
Adapted for LWVC Convention 2015 by Jennifer Waggoner, LWVC Director*

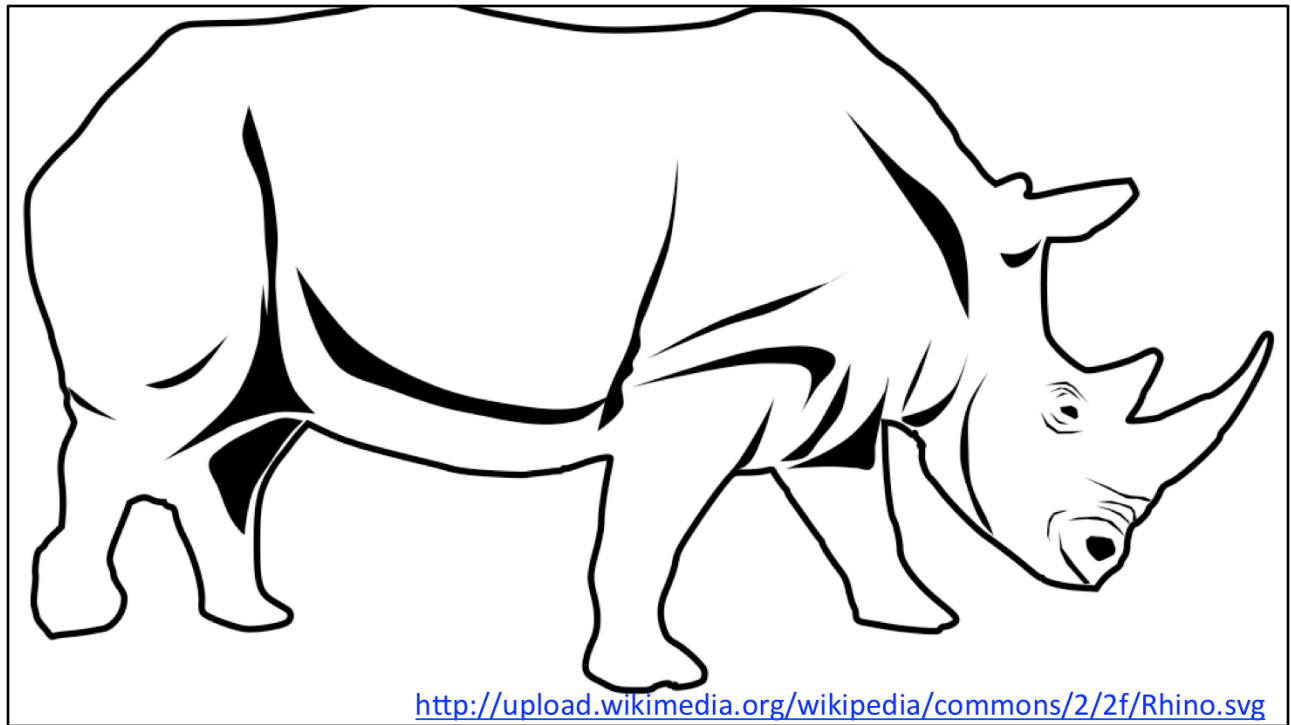


Welcome. I'm using slides and notes, but want this to be a warm conversation. I want to thank Melissa Breach, the LWV California Executive Director, for giving me this training after SHE did it at the national League Convention in 2014 in Dallas, TX.

I'll try to describe what is on the slides, for people who can't see them. Please, please let me know if I can improve at this.

I encourage people who need accommodation to move to the location in the room which works best for them to participate, often the front.

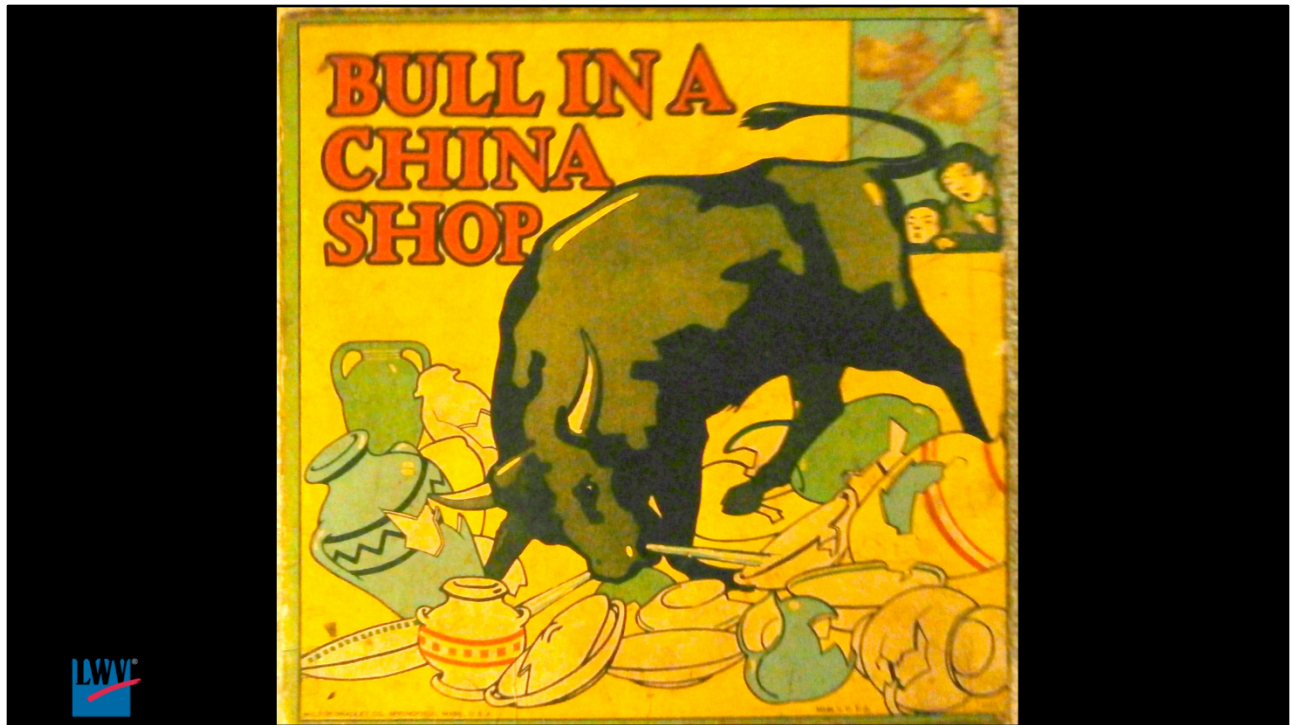
Those of you in the back, please move up. I know people often come in late, so I'd like the front tables to be full. If you're sitting with someone you know, consider taking a risk and sitting at a table where you'll make new friends.



Thanks to Wikimedia for making this illustration of a rhinoceros available.

Some of you might know WHY the **Rhino in the Room** is the informal title of this workshop.

For those of you who are guessing, I am willing to bet that it is NOT what you think.



Thanks to Milton Bradley for making this art from their old game available, illustrating a bull smashing china as people at the window look on in horror.

When I heard "Rhino in the Room" I immediately got confused and thought of a "Bull in a China Shop" and leadership.

Something to do with leaders trapped in a delicate situation and blundering their way through? Leaders don't know what they're talking about but make stuff up? Like I am doing right now with Melissa's presentation?



WRONG! I was so wrong. The story of the Rhino in the Room is SO SO much better than that.



Then I thought about Ignoring the Elephant in the Room. Also a great lesson for leaders, right?

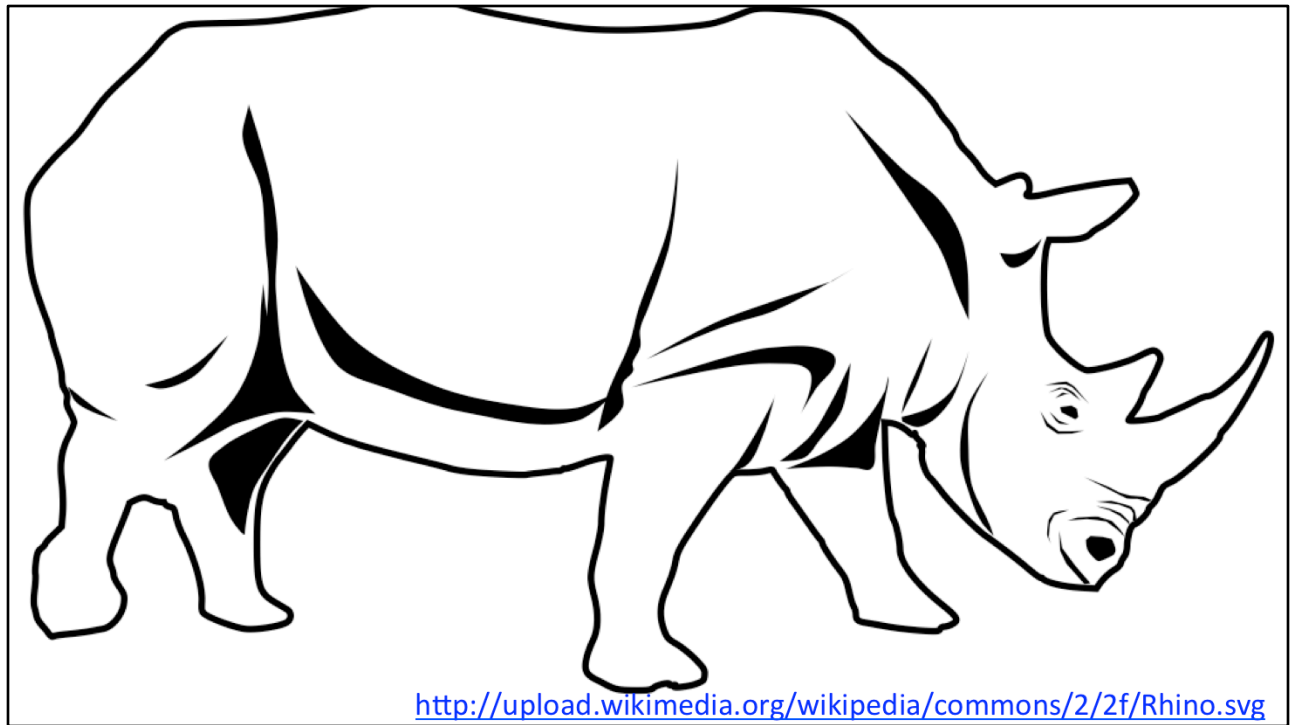
This slide is of a live elephant painted by one of my favorite artists, Banksy, to have it blend in to the living room at an exhibit in 2006 in LA.



WRONG! I was so wrong. Rhino in the Room is NOT the Elephant in the Room.

Melissa wouldn't tell me what it meant until she finished training me on the WHOLE workshop. It was worth it!

So now YOU have to stick it out to the end of the workshop to find out what it DOES reference.



The rhino is not a bull and is not an elephant, so we're all going to let the Rhino go for now and I promise it will make sense later.



Remember that this is your time, and I am here as a facilitator creating a space for you to talk, offering a new tool that you can use, change, or decide not to use. But this is your workshop.

- Try not to be a bull in a china shop.
- Acknowledge the elephant in the room.
- Be honest and vulnerable

Be prepared to listen, challenge your assumptions, share your stories, and explore new ideas together intimately.

The more you put into this workshop, the more you'll get out of it.

Leaderful League



The workbook asked you:

- Does your League have all the leaders it needs to be effective?
- Do those leaders reflect the diversity of your membership and/or community?
- What are the consequences of you not having enough of the right people in your League?

3 Objectives

1. **Contemplate & inspire** each other
2. Introduce **Leaderful Practice**
3. Consider whether this will help you and your League **after Convention**

1. Goal: get people to see that resistance to change is an issue for individuals and our culture.



How many of you are still sitting at a table with someone you know? Again, I want to encourage you to split up.

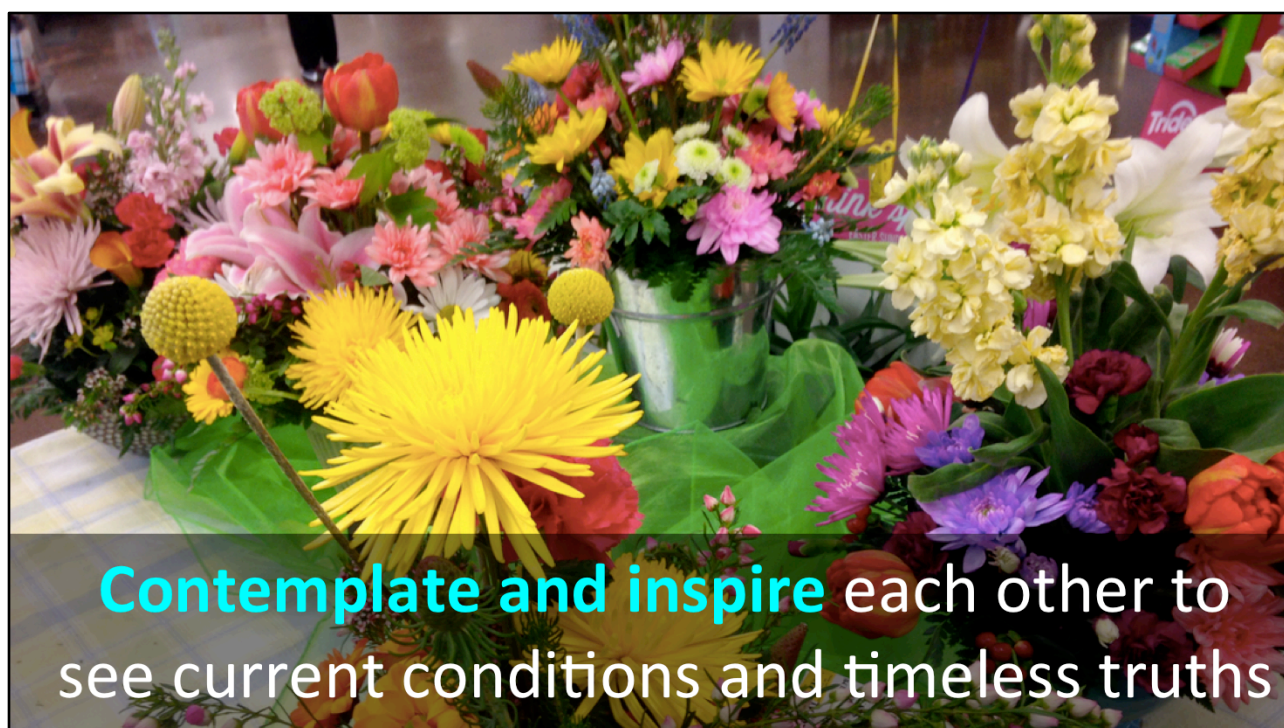
I'm going to ask you to spend just 10 minutes introducing yourselves. All you have time for is your first name, what League you're from, and discuss briefly "What Defines a Leader?"

We will come back to this discussion of a "What defines a leader" later so you may want to jot down a few notes for yourself if you're inspired, but don't feel like you have to! We're just warming up our brains with the idea, to dive deeper later.

10 Minutes

- Name
- League
- What Defines a Leader?

TIME: 10 minutes



You've gotten to know each other more, so I'm going to ask some questions so you'll get to know the room a bit.

Raise your hand if you're:

- new to the League: member less than 2 years?
- member more than 10 years?
- have only been involved with one League, your local League?
- Consider the League your "main" form of volunteerism?

Raise your hand if you:

- Consider yourself a leader
- Regularly get feedback (compliments or constructive criticism) on your leadership abilities?
- Regularly GIVE feedback to other League members about their leadership?

Raise your hand if:

- Your have new leaders rising up in your League all the time
- Your League's membership is increasing
- Your League is demographically representative of your community

Introductions and Assumptions

1. Learners and teachers

2. Agents of change

3. Safe space

1. **We're all learners and teachers.** Collectively we are both. It is tough to be both at the same time, but we're trusting each other to do that.

2. **Agent of Change:** Support a **culture where change is embraced as inevitable and positive**, failure is expected and learned from, and success is invested in. Evolution and improvement. Not pre-judged or heroic but instead it is a viewpoint and way of being in a culture. Why being open to and enthusiastic about change will benefit you:

- -- studies link failure and success: they aren't opposites, they correlate. Leaguers are A students, want to bask in success. Students who get the most right answers get the most wrong answers.
- -- this is an emerging practice. Leaderful practice as a concept could inspire you to new insight, try new tactics, learn more.
- -- Agents of change serve in many different roles:

EXAMPLE: Kathy Armstrong on LWVC board had a good idea of trying out Task Force model for delegation. It wasn't her role to make that up, but we tried it. If it worked we'd keep doing it. If it didn't, we'd stop.

Assessing Challenges in California

- Conversation Mapping
- Landscape Study
- **Surveys:** Leadership, Membership, Voter Service, Program Planning

Who has NEVER heard of these three things? Doesn't know what they are? OK – I'll tell you.

OVERALL League values: by and from our members, our communities. Experts are great, but we know that a strong community is built from an often slower and more complex process which needs to be rooted in grassroots knowledge, experience, values, priorities?

[illegible]

Who here has participated in a Conversation Map?
Who here has been trained to run one?

Sarah Diefendorf has done them at board retreats, regional workshops, Councils, this Convention, and will be doing more trainings about them. There are even YouTube videos we can share.

Very briefly – the idea is that you start with a trigger in the center, such as “League 2020” and then people brainstorm by writing a response and then drawing a line back to what triggered them. By the end, you have “conversations” build as one trigger leads to another and leads to another. In particular, it is a great way to get input from a lot of people without it taking a TON of time and organization. It also helps you get over power imbalances because the shy quiet person doesn’t have to speak up. People who have less power in your group, or who fear retaliation, can write down “hot button” issues and nobody need know it was from them.

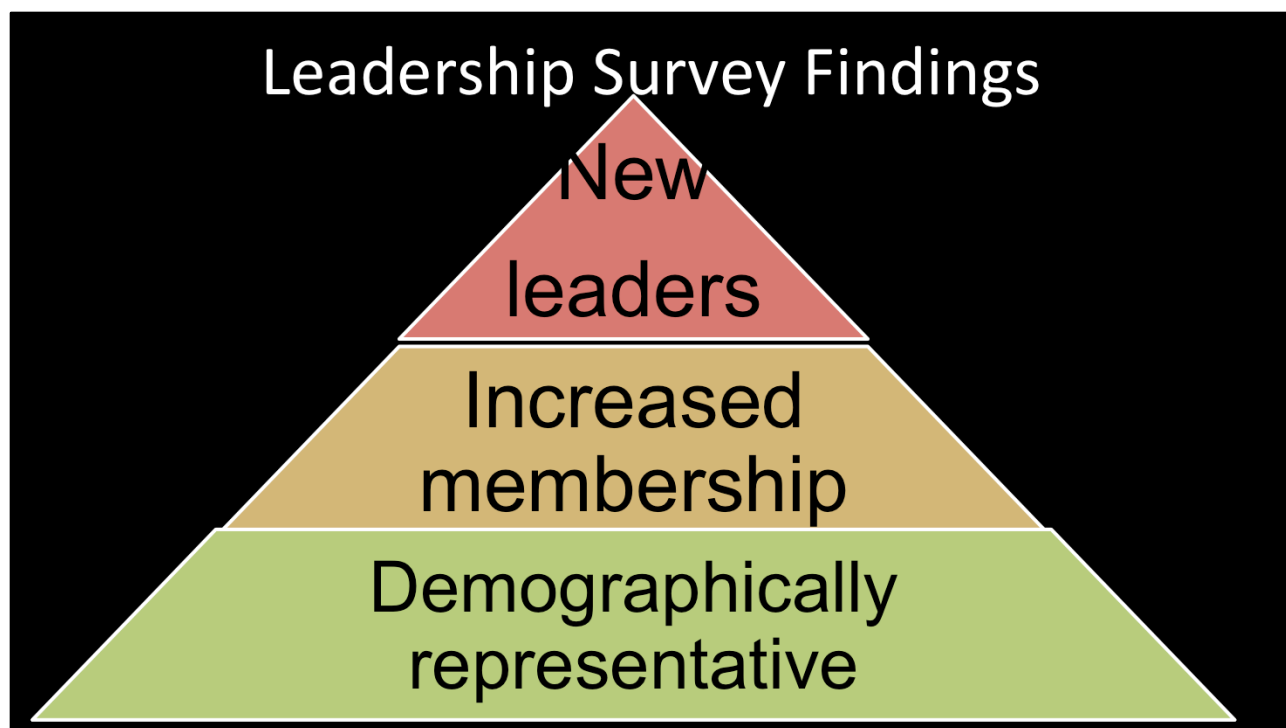
Landscape Survey



Limited one done 4 years ago when Melissa joined the org. If you're curious, ask her more about them. She likes recommending books, YouTube videos, experts you can talk to. And of course, you can talk to her!

A Landscape Survey asks general questions and includes detailed interviews with people in our area of influence, so for example: other nonprofits, politicians, donors, think tanks, academics and think tanks, members of similar organizations, etc.

We want to do this AFTER Convention, so that we can take discussions here into account in designing it.



As listed in the overview slide, we ask members for feedback A LOT. Survey leadership, Survey membership, Voter Service Survey for every election at least and Program Planning every two years. For this workshop, we're going to focus on a key survey in which YOU told us three things were your top concerns:

2014 Leadership Survey Findings: Based on responses, the top three membership-related challenges perceived by this survey's participants regardless of size, urban/rural, wealth, etc is:

- 1) Building a member base that is demographically representative of the regions(s) they work in (age, race and language)
- 2) Building a larger member base (who and for what varied, but strongly hands-on volunteers)
- 3) Developing new leadership within the member community (not getting the leaders they needed. Wrong personality, values, skills). **Exhaustion came through.**

There are some strong connections between the top three challenges facing California's League Developing new leadership that has the time and energy required to sustain the League's impact requires having newer and younger members. Obtaining newer and younger members requires a more holistic approach to

What is Leaderful Practice?



Position Authority Influence

Shifting Paradigm: What does this arrow mean?

The tool I'm sharing with you relies on moving away from positional power to shared authority and influence. *A leaderful org is one in which every capable and willing member/volunteer/partner assumes leadership in the moment, in their relationships with peers, team members, stakeholders and organizational partners.*

What is Leaderful Practice?



Position Authority Influence

What defines a leader? (2 min asking audience) and where would you put it on this arrow?

End of the day, to know if you're a leader you have to look behind you. The people who choose to follow are what makes you a leader.

Residual Benefit: Sharing power = easier for new members to have an impact and learn on the job. Sharing power = easier for leaders to enter the league laterally.

EXAMPLE: Women as team with front person and administrative behind the scenes person = shared power. Problem is that it is informal and may not make it clear to others who is the leader they're following.

EXAMPLE: delegate to task forces and have the board actually follow their recommendation.

"There is a profound difference between management and leadership," they wrote, "and both are important.

'To manage' means 'to bring about, to accomplish, to have charge of or responsibility for, to conduct.'

'Leading' is 'influencing, guiding in direction, course, action, opinion.'"

First Table Exercise

1. Select facilitator

Consensus

Engaged

Documentation

Time

30 seconds

Who is the facilitator at your table?

Facilitators will ensure everyone is engaged and that consensus is build and that things are documented in the time allotted.

- Probably should have a watch.
- Can delegate documentation to someone with great handwriting or keep that role for themselves.

First Task **30 seconds**

1. Select facilitator

Consensus

Engaged

Documentation

Time

Time: 30 seconds

First Table Exercise

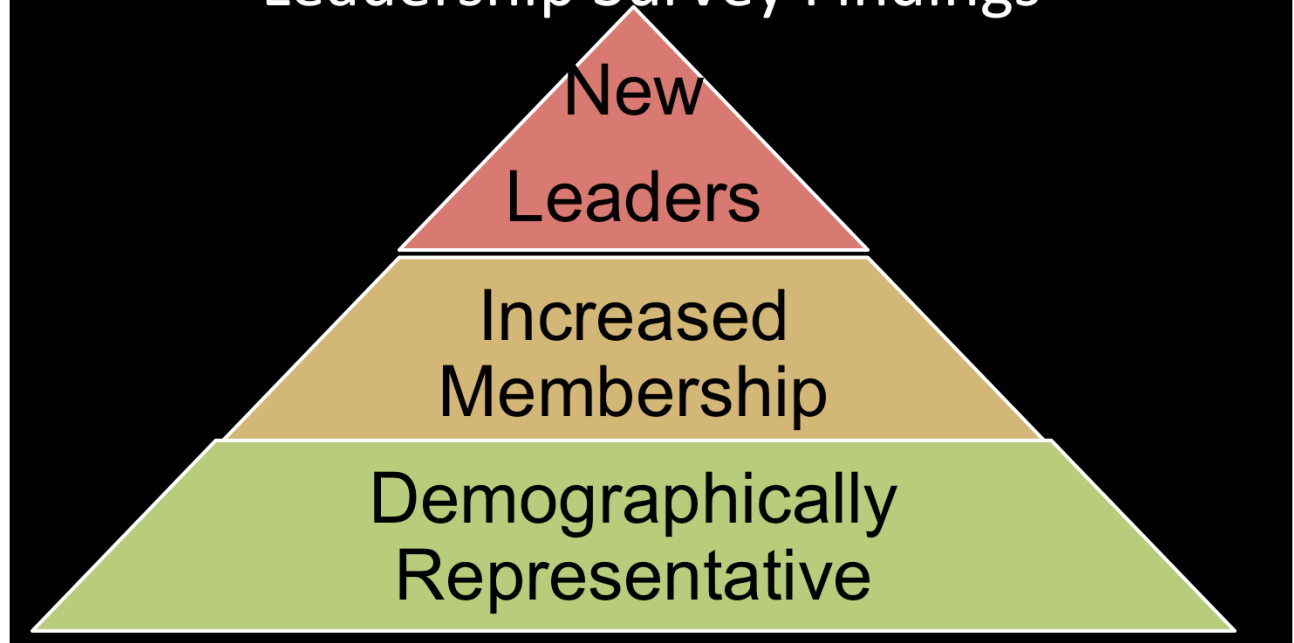
2. Select a **challenge** from the survey = shared by the Leagues at your table.

Write it at the top of a page of flip chart paper.

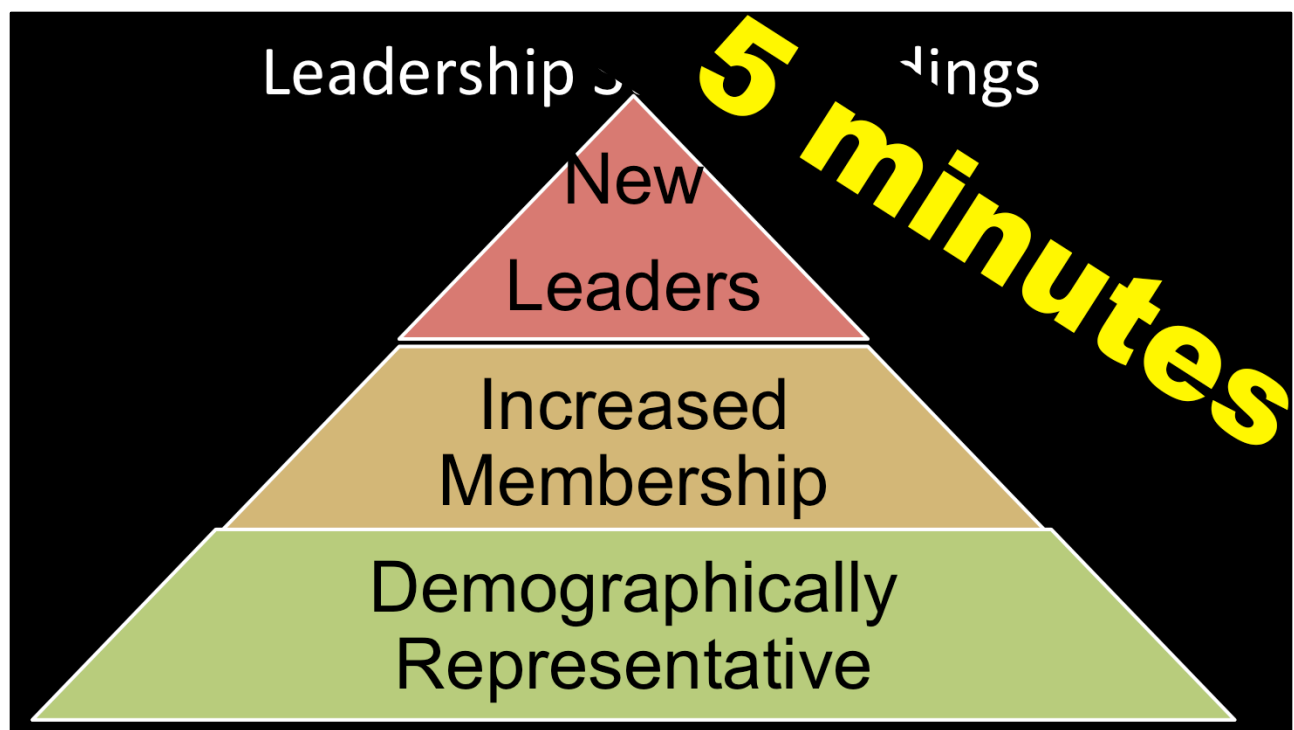
Facilitators: does every table have a flip chart?

You have 3 minutes to talk and decide of the 3 core issues in the pyramid reach consensus re: what you'll work on. It should reflect the biggest issue facing you and your Leagues. If your League doesn't have a lot in common with the others at your table, you may have to compromise and pick an issue that isn't the TOP priority in your League... but **your facilitator will help work out what will be the best topic for YOUR table as a group to work on today.**

Leadership Survey Findings



These are the challenges your group will discuss today. New leaders, Increased membership, and being demographically representative.



TIME: 5 minutes

ASK: Raise your hand if you picked:

- New Leaders
- Increased Membership
- Demographically Representative

OK – you all get to relax for a bit because I need to explain a few concepts before we move to the next phase of the exercise.

4 Primary Tenets of a Leaderful Practice

1. Concurrent
2. Collective
3. Collaborative
4. Compassionate

These are the 4 primary tenets. We're just going to do the first one of them, CONCURRENT, but I'm going to quickly explain them all, so that your interest is piqued for MORE LEARNING after Convention, but also so that you really "get" what the first one, CONCURRENT, means in comparison to the other tenets.

- **Concurrent – this is the one we're going to do, so I'll come back to it.**
- **I apologize, but for tenets 2-4 I'm going to ask you to hold your questions.** Maybe write them down to ask me or Melissa Breach AFTER the workshop.
- I want to be sure we save as much time as possible for coming back to #1, where we're focusing.

4 Primary Tenets of a Leaderful Practice

1. Concurrent
2. Collective
3. Collaborative
4. Compassionate

- Individual to collective especially for responsibility. I'm very passionate about this one because League leaders need to delegate more, particularly to people OFF the BOARD, but I'll be brief. I think structurally the League has done this well from our founding because of our emphasis on the grassroots and consensus building, but face some big challenges operationally today.
- But what does it really mean?

Collective



Leaderful leadership is collective.

There doesn't have to be only one leader in a League!

Many people within the League might be operating as leaders. The group is not solely dependent on one individual to mobilize action or make decisions on behalf of others. Decisions are made by whoever has the relevant responsibility. Being the president is a role, not omnipotence.

Leadership may thus reside with multiple members of the team, especially when important needs arise. One leader might preparing for a strategic mission, creating meaning for the group, or proposing a change in direction. Although someone may initiate an activity, others may become involved and share leadership with the initiator. And the president might not take a strong leadership role in this.

I could talk about this all day, but we don't have time.

4 Primary Tenets of a Leaderful Practice

1. Concurrent
2. Collective
3. Collaborative
4. Compassionate

- Controlling to collaborative – League is pretty good at this.

Collaborative



All members of the team, not just the President, are in control of and may speak for the entire organization.

Long time League leaders may recoil in HORROR because of our belief in “speaking with one voice”. THIS tenet supports that! Everyone must speak with one voice! But your members can be empowered to use an action alert to make their own social media posts. Or a local committee might be authorized to take all press releases from the national and state Leagues and do outreach to their local press WITHOUT board or president approval. Your League’s reproductive rights expert might be authorized to quote League positions in meetings without having to bring the president or advocacy chair along with them to the meeting.

But this is more about conversation WITHIN your League than OUTSIDE your League.

A leaderful league is collaborative when leaders advocate a point of view that they believe can contribute to the common good of the community. Although they might be assertive at times, they are equally sensitive to the views and feelings of others and consider the viewpoints of others to be equally valid.

Again, for example, – the President is just a role but not omnipotent. They believe they must persuade others, and be open to persuasion, rather than control the

4 Primary Tenets of a Leaderful Practice

1. Concurrent
2. Collective
3. Collaborative
4. Compassionate

- Dispassionate to compassionate – League is pretty good at this. However...
- Failure to act because it might upset someone is a problem I see in the League a lot. I've seen that happen multiple times at the state level with board members, staff, volunteers, and with people outside the League. We don't mind fighting for what is right when we're indignant, but we fear disappointing people, making them cry, or facing their wrath. We'd rather do nothing than do the right thing, but face emotional turmoil.
- Passive aggressive behavior also can be a problem: I claim to be compassionate, but the result of my actions are not kind. Passive aggressive behavior is superficial kindness at best.

But let me read the description, because you'll immediately think of all the POSITIVE things about it the League.

Compassionate



By demonstrating compassion, one extends commitment to preserving the dignity of others.

Shareholders' views are considered before making a decision for the entire enterprise. Each member of the organization is to be valued regardless of his or her background or social standing, and all viewpoints are to be considered regardless whether or not they conform to current thought processes.

In practicing compassion, leaders take the stance of a learner who sees the adaptability of the organization as dependent upon the contribution of others.

Compassionate leaders also recognize that values are intrinsically interconnected with leadership and that **there is no higher value than democratic participation**. When people who have a stake in a venture are given every chance to participate in that venture – including its implementation – their commitment to the venture will be assured.

4 Primary Tenets of a Leaderful Practice

1. Concurrent
2. Collective
3. Collaborative
4. Compassionate

I'm sure you all have a LOT of questions and thoughts about Collective, Collaborative and Compassionate but I want to be sure we have time for the one we're going to DEEPLY dive into.

Ok – this is where you need to be ready with questions, observations, and comments. Concurrent.

4 Tenets of Leaderful Practice



The first tenet, that leadership is concurrent, is perhaps the most revolutionary.

What is being suggested is that in any organization, there can be more than one leader operating at the same time, so leaders willingly and naturally share power with others. Indeed, power can be increased by everyone working together.

Since leaders perform a variety of responsibilities in an organization, it is pointless to insist that there be only one leader operating at any one time.

For a basic example, an administrative VP, who "knows the ropes" and can help people figure out who is knowledgeable about a particular function. The VP may be just as important to the League as the President. Or more so! However, the President does not give up his or her leadership as members of the group turn their attention to the VP.

They're leaderful because there are multiple integrated leaders. Let's go deeper.

Situational Manager



One aspect of being leaderfully concurrent is **becoming situational**. The leadership you exhibit, or the leader you follow, depends on the situation.

I'll share a quick anecdote which is personal to me and gets at a deeper concept than just writing up different job descriptions. I'll show you a chart, then ask for YOUR anecdotes.

- A group called Off the Mat has influenced my leadership style quite a bit in the past 3 years. I love the idea of being present and seeing what is around me, and what I can do in that current reality. I see my situation for what it is ongoing and make the most of it. This requires a lot of attention moment to moment, letting go of what I thought was important yesterday and accepting my attention should be elsewhere.
- Stories about who I am and what the League will be or what our project plan says are aspirational, but rarely accurate. I can have that ideal of growing the League in CA to be a \$3M org with over 2 million supporters, I may have a calendar and a work plan, but don't decide through sheer force of will to ignore current realities and MAKE that plan determine who leads and how in my League.

Situational Manager

Condition of your community:

- Members
- Capacity
- Culture
- Complexity

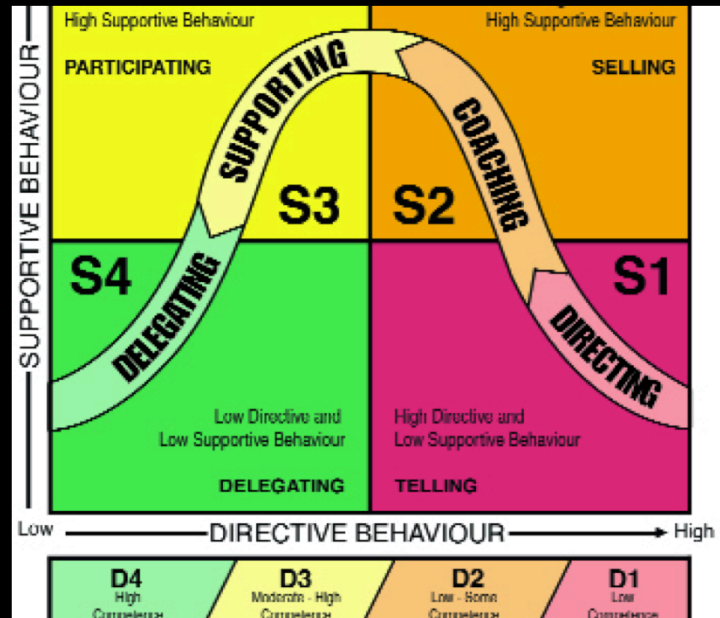
Members are these sorts of people, who joined because of this, dislike that

Capacity – admitting we don't have capacity is really hard for League members. If someone can use paperclips and change found in the couch, they'll do it. Maybe we shouldn't do things we can't fund, can't get volunteers for, don't have the right experience or talent for

Culture – not necessarily good or bad, but the values and relationships and processes

Situational Managers

adjust their management styles to reflect the conditions of their communities



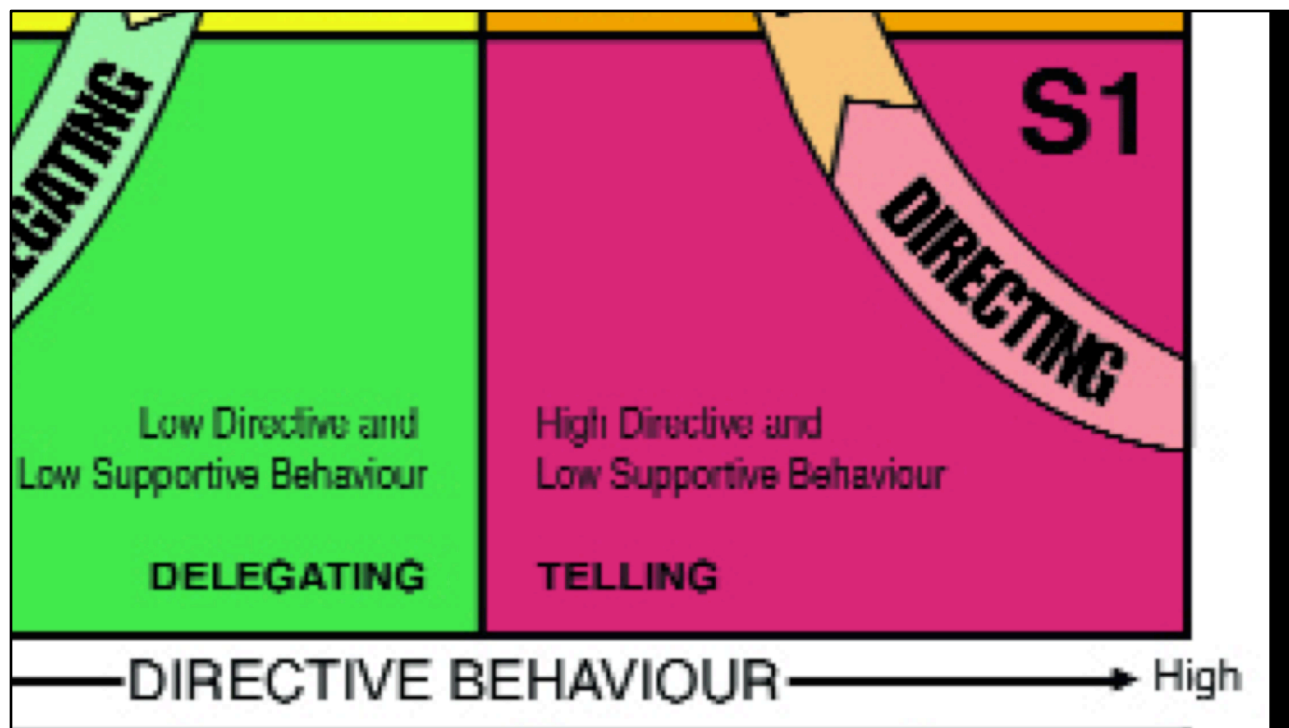
4 frames: as a leader, you might need to do any of them. Let's go through them all.

There are 4 styles in a grid.

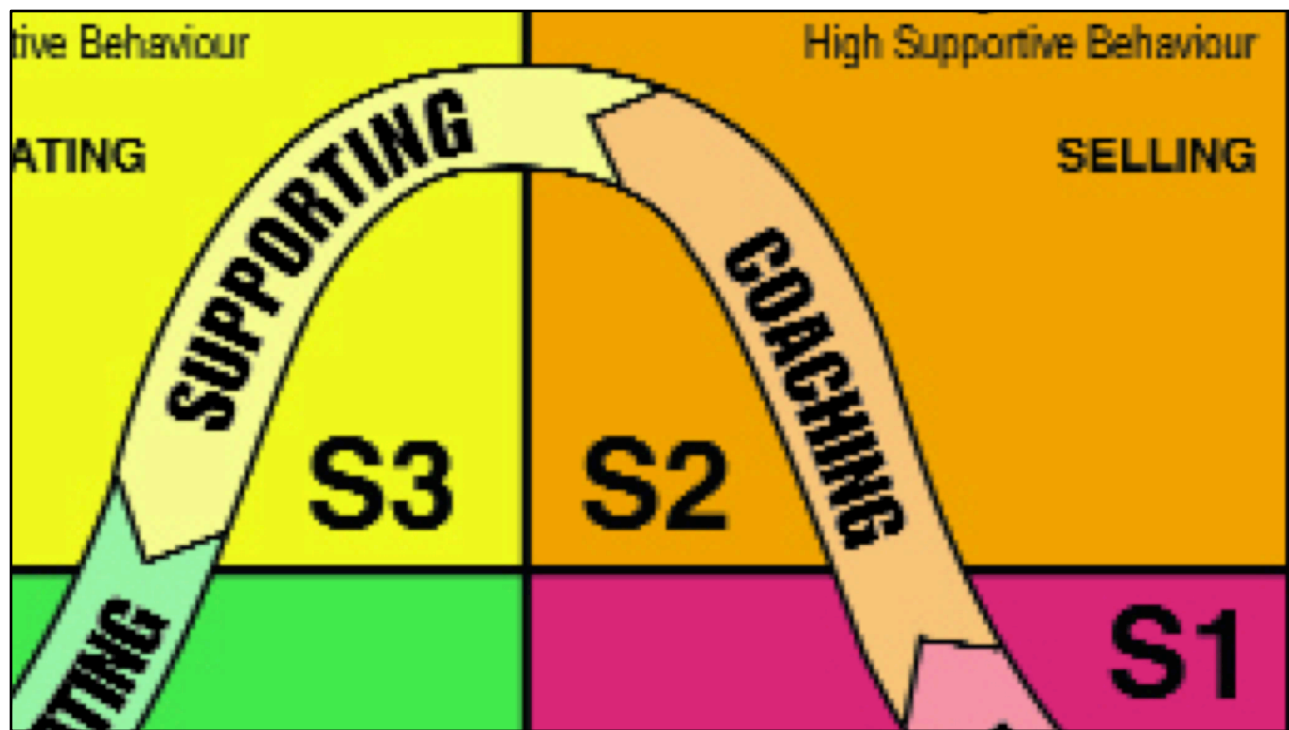
Across the bottom from left to right is the amount of "Directive Behavior" you exhibit. Left = low, Right = high.

From top to bottom is the amount of "Supportive Behavior" you exhibit. Along the top is high and along the bottom is low.

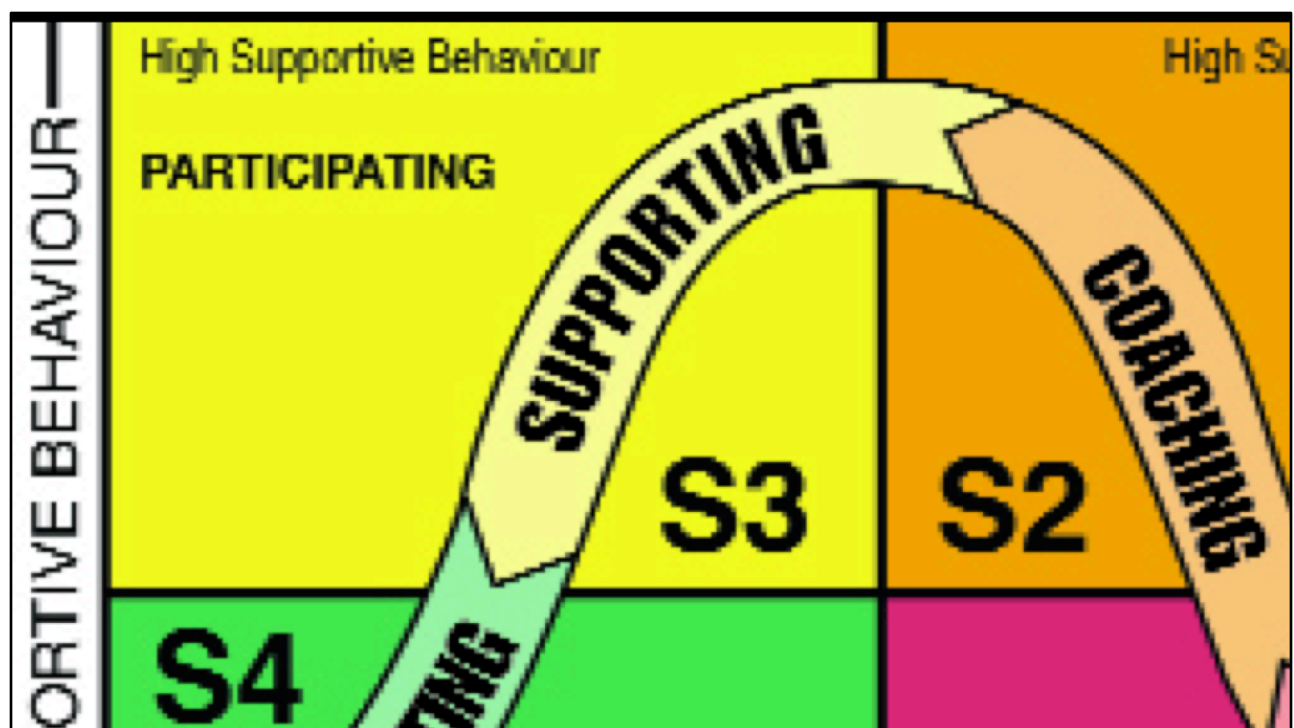
Let's learn about each of the 4 styles now, and I'll talk about them in a flow, starting at lower right S1 and going counter-clockwise.



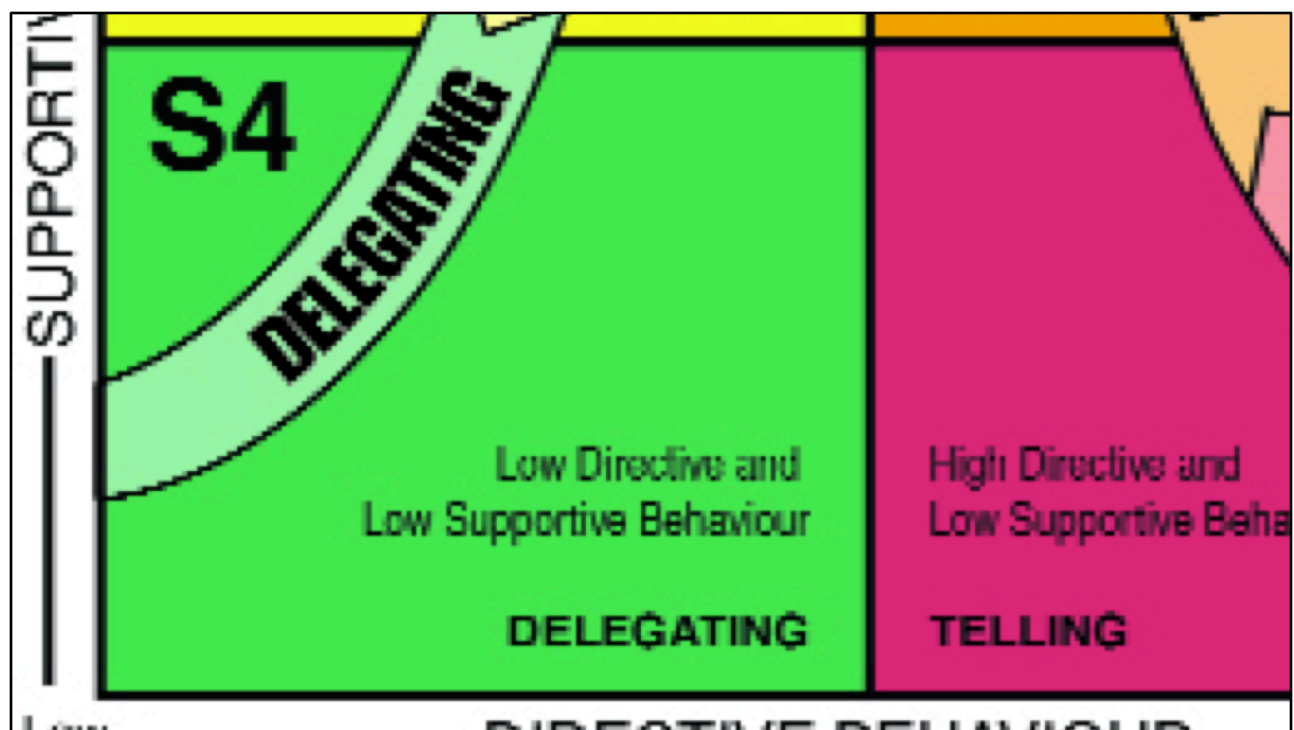
There is a gradient at the bottom that we'll delve more into in a minute, so let's start with S1: Directing



S2: Coaching



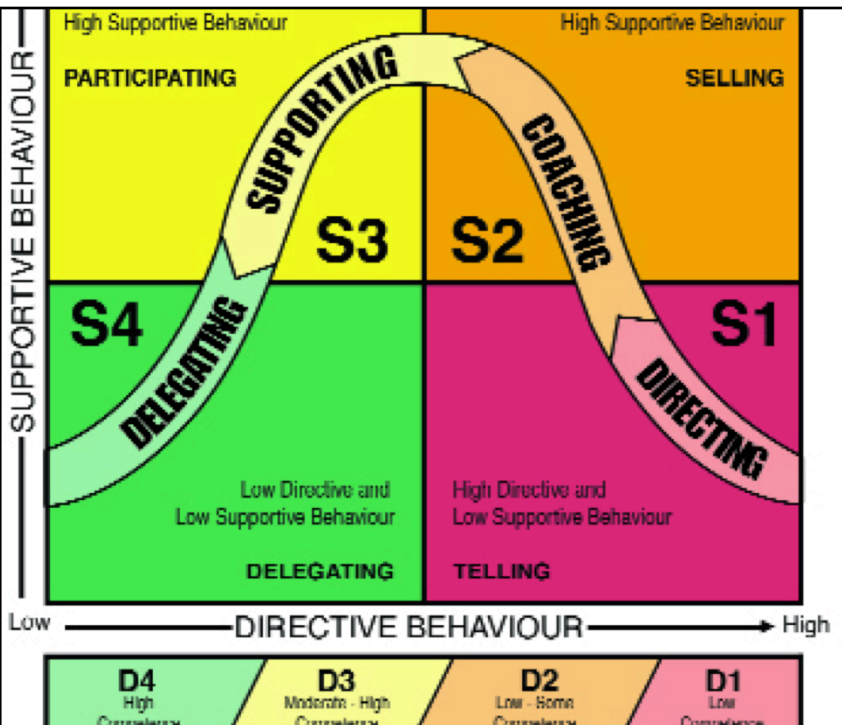
S3: Supporting



S4: Delegating

Situational Managers

adjust their management styles to reflect the conditions of their communities



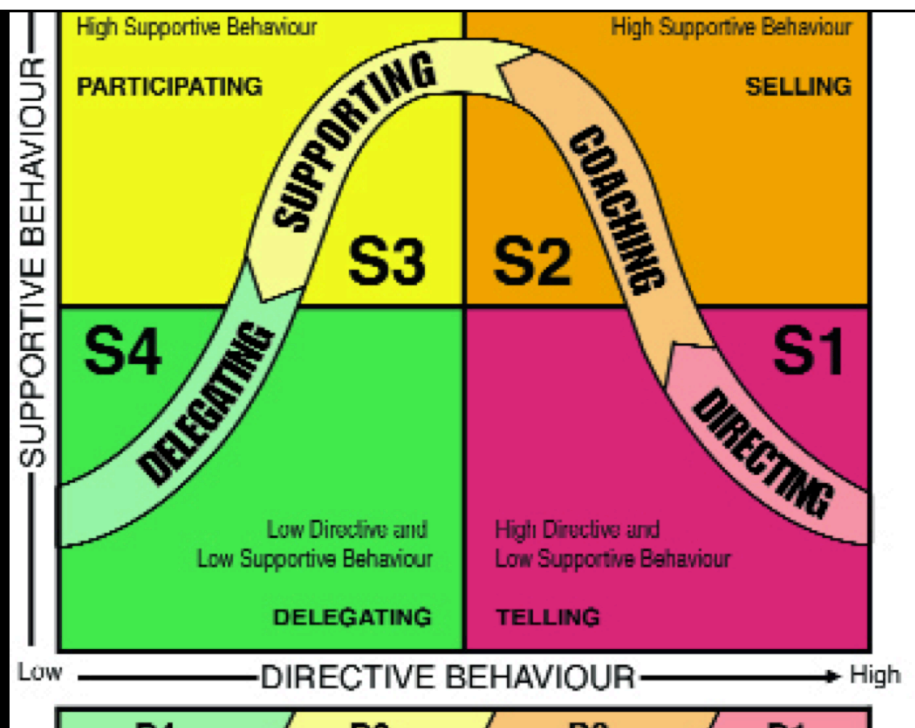
One quadrant is not BETTER than another. This is a tool to help you think about your leadership and leadership in your League. Assess your community and think about what might be needed.

For example: I'd guess we're focused on coaching nationally based on our culture and leadership. Very supportive, but also very directive.

One quadrant is not BETTER than another. This is a tool to help you think about your leadership and leadership in your League. Assess your community and think about what might be needed. We're going to do an exercise in just a minute, but before we do, let's do a time check.

What time is it?

4:30



Question: Would you say that you're more comfortable in more zone than another?
Or maybe there is one zone that you avoid?

ONLY UNTIL 4PM.

Example of how situational managers change roles and how this typically works as a flow. Let's get complex!

Question: How many of you have heard of Forming, Storming, Norming and Performing? Let's look at the Leaderful chart I just gave you, but in the context of Forming, Storming, Norming and Performing.

The Leader's Energy Flow!

	FORMING	STORMING	NORMING	PERFORMING
	Directive	Coaching	Supportive	Delegating
New	High	High	Low	Low
Ongoing	Low	High	Moderate	Low

Left to right are the 4 columns: forming, storming, norming and performing.
The next Yellow row is = the leaderful collaborative model. So left to right are: Directive, Coaching, Supportive, Delegating.

- Forming is the same as Directive.
- Storming is the same as Coaching.
- Norming is the same as Supportive.
- And Performing is the same as Delegating.

Let's talk about the **energy it is going to take your League's leadership** to run two projects, as examples. One is new. One is ongoing. They're rows in this chart.

Forming requires a directive leadership style because people don't know what is going on, don't have skills, and you're trying to reach agreement.

Storming is when folks are all in consensus so you all are coaching each other and growing the work.

Norming is when people are weighing in where needed. This is really distributed.

Performing: for leaders, you might be keeping the plates spinning, but the hope is that you've got the goodwill, skills, and process to do that with less energy.

Are there examples in League?

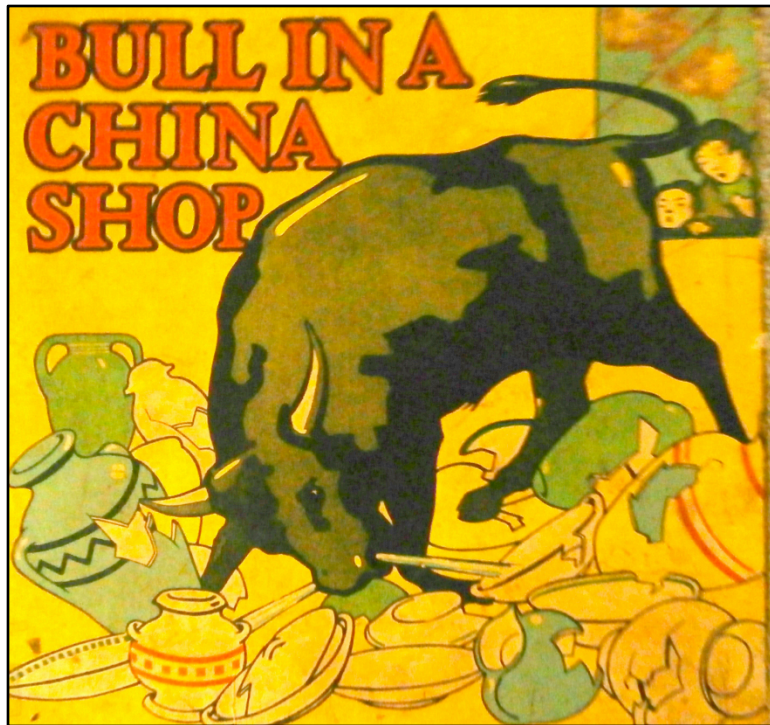
Questions to Get You Thinking



How many leaders here see themselves as someone who embraces change?
Here are some red flags to watch out for, which might be a sign that you could be critical because a proposal require change (rather than some other critique you could offer).

Challenges to Change

1. Resistance
2. Impatience
3. Lack of Readiness
4. Silver Bullets
5. Decrees



How does
influence
differ from
control?

Could pose this earlier in the training.

What are legitimate seats of power:

- expert,
- will do the work
- referred power (people say people should listen to you)
- positional power
- resources
- coercive (can make threats to badmouth you or present you as corrupt)

How does
authority
relate to
accountability?



everyone wants to make the decision, but nobody wants to be held accountable for it if it doesn't go right

Second Table Exercise: BRAINSTORM

Brainstorm **concurrent strategies** that might address your challenge. 3 rules:

1. Everyone offers an idea before anyone speaks for a second time
2. Do not assess or debate
3. Strategies must be specific

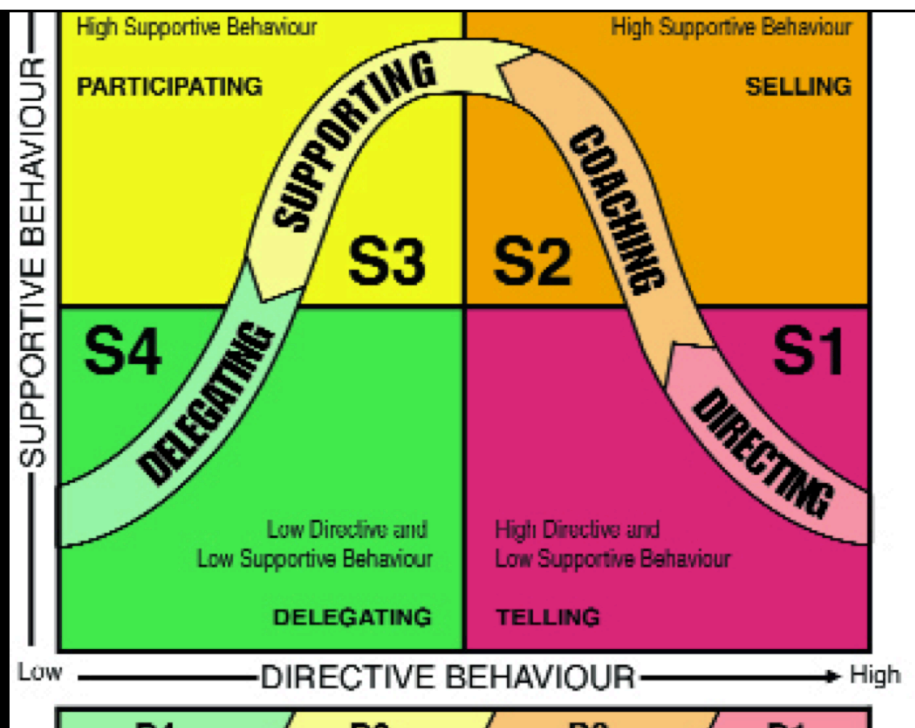
Try to have 30 minutes for this

1. Remember who your facilitator is?
2. Have your flip chart with your challenge?
3. For the purpose of this exercise, your table is a **local League board**.
4. You are having a **strategy discussion** about the issue on your flip chart.

However, you're brainstorming. You're not discussing. You're not assessing. Come up with as many different ideas as you can.

Facilitators: you can use shorthand, as long as everyone in your group really knows what the idea was, and so that when you come back to this chart later, your group will know what the shorthand meant.

**End
at
5:15**



All you are doing is brainstorming. Don't assess or discuss the merits. You can ask questions about people's strategies, to be sure you understand what your table-mates are suggesting.

You have until 5:15.

Second Table Exercise: CONSENSUS

- Come to consensus about your **two best ideas** that might address your challenge.
- Decide **who** will share them.

End at 5:20

Ok – now look at your massive brainstorm and come to consensus about your two best ideas.

Second Table Exercise: REPORT

problem

top 2 concurrent strategies

We have X minutes so I'd like to start with a group that knows they can be really fast.
Which group is that?
Which group had a really fun time with this?

3 Objectives

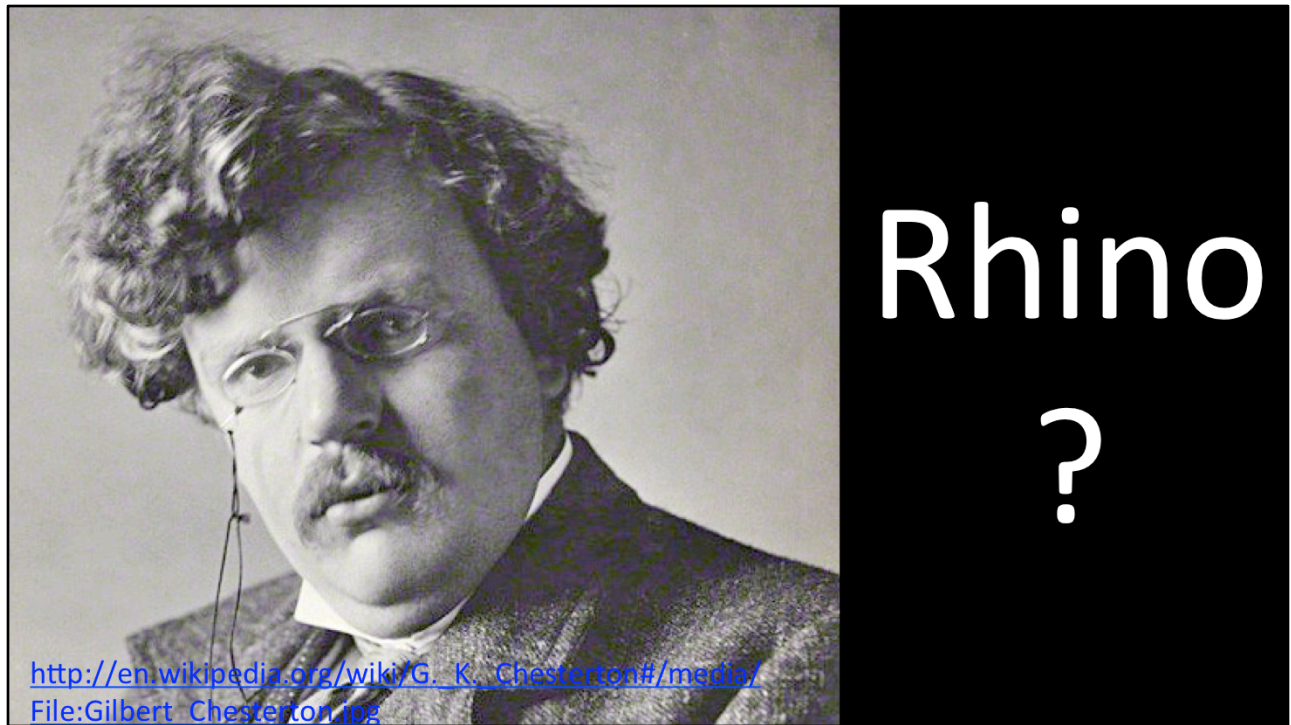
1. **Contemplate & inspire** each other
2. Introduce **Leaderful Practice**
3. Consider whether this will help you and your League **after Convention**

1. Goal: get people to see that resistance to change is an issue for individuals and our culture.

Session Take-Aways

	SHORT-TERM	LONGER-TERM
WHO		
WHAT		
WHEN		
HOW		

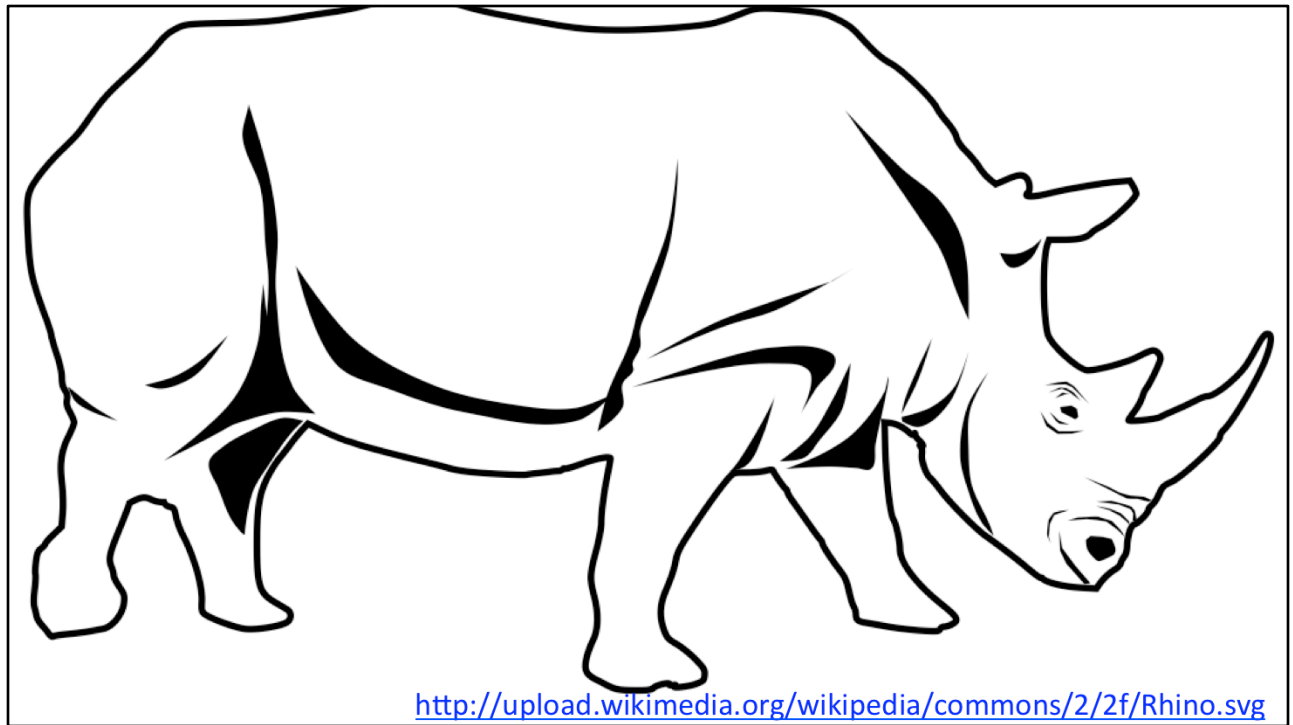
	SHORT-TERM	LONGER-TERM
WHO	<i>Membership Chair</i>	<i>Whole Board</i>
WHAT	<i>Leaderful Practice Training Proposal</i>	<i>Leaderful Practice Training Program</i>
WHEN	<i>Call Wednesday</i>	<i>Sept board mtg</i>
HOW	<i>Report my experience</i>	<i>Collaborate w/ Membership Chair</i>



Thanks again to Wikipedia for this great photo of G.K.Chesterson! If I had curly hair, I'd make it stand out like that, too.

He was a famous English writer in the early 1900's... in commenting on the difference between "power" and "authority" he said,

“If a rhinoceros were to enter this restaurant now, there is no denying he would have great **power** here. But I would be the first to rise and assure him that he had **no authority** whatever.”



So to remember the difference between Authority and Power, think of the Rhino.